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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 TEL AVIV 001548

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media reported that following a meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II at the White House on Tuesday, President Bush reiterated his call on Israel to cease settlement construction and to enable the creation of a Palestinian state, saying both parties must make concessions. Bush reiterated the United States' belief that Hizbulah is a terrorist organization, and voiced his hope that "Hizbulah would prove that they are not by laying down arms and not threatening peace." The President said that he and the King had discussed the concern that Hizbulah may try to derail the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel Radio reported that the PA will assume security control of Jericho and the adjacent village of Uja today, as only one of three roadblocks around the city will be under Palestinian control, and the Jordan Valley highway will continue to be under Israel's responsibility. The station quoted a senior Palestinian official as saying that PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas had been misinformed about Israel's agreement to the release of PFLP leader Ahmed Sa'adat, who was behind the assassination of cabinet minister Rehavam Zeevi. Jerusalem Post reported that such a release might have jeopardized the move. Israel Radio quoted chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat as saying that the PA would continue to demand the release of both men as part as the freeing of Palestinian prisoners. Ha'aretz reported that an unnamed senior Palestinian security official told a group of activists from the military wing of Fatah that they could either give up their weapons and go home after the Israeli withdrawal from West Bank cities, or they could join the Palestinian security services.

Maariv cited the defense establishment's concern that settlers could set up a new outpost following the evacuation of each settlement. Leading media reported that on Tuesday, the police thwarted an attempt to block the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway during the visit of foreign dignitaries to Yad Vashem.

All media reported on last night's inauguration of the new Holocaust museum at Yad Vashem, during which world leaders pledged to fight anti-Semitism. Jerusalem Post noted the conspicuous absence of Arab leaders or PA representatives at the event. Maariv reported that the first Holocaust museum in the world for the Arab public was inaugurated Tuesday in Nazareth, the result of a private initiative by two residents of the Israeli Arab town of Umm el-Fahm, who head the Arab Institute For the Holocaust Research and Education. The institute printed a booklet about the Holocaust in Arabic, which is distributed in schools in Israel and the territories and will be given out to Palestinians who pass through the Jenin roadblock. Maariv quoted Attorney Khaled Mahmeed, who conceived the idea of the museum, as saying: "The Palestinian people paid the price for the Jewish Holocaust in that they became the refugees and remained without a country. The fact that Jews were murdered in Germany led to Palestinians not having a state." Mahmeed added: "As a result of their lack of knowledge, the Arabs and Palestinians deny the Holocaust." The Nazareth Holocaust museum site in Arabic is [www.alkaritha.org](http://www.alkaritha.org).

Israel Radio reported that an Israeli civilian was lightly wounded Tuesday night in a shooting attack in Hebron. Ha'aretz web site reported that IDF troops operating near Jenin before dawn today arrested two Palestinians carrying submachine guns, and that two wanted Palestinians were also arrested near Ramallah.

Leading media reported that on Tuesday, the IDF permitted four Palestinians expelled to the Gaza Strip to the Gaza Strip several years ago of their role in terrorism to return to their West Bank to return to their West Bank homes on Tuesday.

Gen. Antoine Lahad, the commander of the disbanded South Lebanon Army (SLA), who was sentenced to death in absentia in Lebanon, was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv's Internet edition Tuesday that he is prepared to return to his country if current changes there eventually bring about the full withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday, the family of Rachel Corrie, a pro-Palestinian activist killed by an IDF bulldozer in Rafah two years ago, filed a lawsuit in the Haifa District Court against the State of Israel and the IDF.

Maariv reported that the U.S. army is pleased with the performance of Israeli-made protection devices installed on armored personnel carriers used in Iraq.

Yediot reported that Iran's new ambassador to the UK Mohammad Hossein Adeli has recently met and shaken hands with an Israeli diplomat serving in London.

Hatzofe reported that on Tuesday, visiting New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg invited Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski to a "We Love Jerusalem" event in New York.

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Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "The demonstration of right-wing activists at the Ayalon freeway on Monday, which included burning tires and subsequently blocking this important traffic artery, does not serve the residents of the Katif Bloc and does not contribute to strengthening public opinion against the disengagement plan."

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Even Abbas has been heard saying lately that he is not afraid of Hamas winning the elections. So, there's no chance the current PA government will send its security forces in to clash with Hamas and forcibly disarm it."

Conservative columnist Yosef Harif wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "Bush must explain to Abu Mazen ... that he cannot expect to satisfy all his wishes."

Palestinian affairs correspondent and far-left Palestinian sympathizer Amira Hass opined in Ha'aretz: "Our murdered relatives are being enlisted to enable Israel to continue not giving a damn about international decisions against the occupation."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "Harmful Demonstration"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (March 16): "The demonstration of right-wing activists at the Ayalon freeway on Monday, which included burning tires and subsequently blocking this important traffic artery, does not serve the residents of the Katif Bloc and does not contribute to strengthening public opinion against the disengagement plan. The Settlers Council did well to voice disapproval of this demonstration, which only caused harm and did not add even a single supporter to the ranks of those who oppose disengagement.... No one would be surprised if an investigation were to show that demonstrations of this sort are initiated by various provocateurs, in order to elicit anger and hatred towards the residents of the Katif Bloc and sympathy for the disengagement plan.... As the date of the implementation of the mad

disengagement plan approaches, the Settlers Council must ensure that no uncontrolled and irresponsible acts are carried out. The residents of the Katif Bloc have the right to demand that people do not demonstrate on their behalf without their consent as to the nature of the demonstration. Only this way will it be possible to neutralize the provocateurs and agents of the Israel Police and GSS, who are liable to go far in their wild acts."

## II. "Hamas Is Feeling Its Strength"

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 16): "The prevailing wisdom in East Jerusalem nowadays among merchants, teachers and professionals is that they feel the Palestinian public is angry at Fatah's activists who have not been serving the public but rather handing out perks to cronies. The way to punish Fatah, they say, is by voting Hamas. Thus, the party's popularity is not because of its anti-Israel policies, but rather the result of disgust with Fatah corruption. Apparently, the feeling that Hamas is going to succeed in the elections has also taken hold in the Palestinian leadership, and even Abbas has been heard saying lately that he is not afraid of Hamas winning the elections. So, there's no chance the current PA government will send its security forces in to clash with Hamas and forcibly disarm it."

## III. "Road Map to Perdition"

Conservative columnist Yosef Harif wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (March 16): "The feeling that it will be easier to achieve peace in the Abu Mazen era undoubtedly results from the man's style.... What can also be observed is a change in the atmosphere around him, and the fact that he is not surrounded by toadies. However, as far as substance is concerned, there hardly is any difference between him and his predecessor.... Peace in the Abu Mazen era is only possible if President Bush can instill in the Palestinian leader the realization that concessions cannot be expected only from one side, as President Lyndon Johnson did in his time. This happened during a meeting between Johnson and [Jordan's late] King Hussein, after the Six Day-War.... Johnson told [King Hussein]: 'You must acknowledge the fact that you will no longer have what you had'. If Abu Mazen truly and sincerely wants peace, he must accept Sharon's advice to 'yield part of his dreams.' As to President Bush, who can see that Sharon is indeed making painful concessions, and that he is likely to make further concessions -- Bush must explain to Abu Mazen, in the spirit of President Johnson, that he cannot expect to satisfy all his wishes. Prime Minister [Ariel Sharon] has no choice but to adhere to the road map, but at the same time he must insist on the 14 reservations raised by the government when it accepted the plan."

## IV. "Using the Holocaust to Ward Off Criticism"

Palestinian affairs correspondent and far-left Palestinian sympathizer Amira Hass opined in Ha'aretz (March 16): "The crowd of world leaders visiting the new Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem attests to the strength of Israel's position in the West.... The pilgrimage to Jerusalem of so many European leaders shows that they are not deterred by the criticism of Israel -- they are taking part in a media event that can only be interpreted as support for Israel, as it is today.... This widely covered event shows that Israel has turned the liquidation of Europe's Jews into an asset. Our murdered relatives are being enlisted to enable Israel to continue not giving a damn about international decisions against the occupation. The suffering our parents endured in the ghettos and concentration camps that filled Europe, the physical and mental anguish and torment that our parents were subjected to every single day since the 'liberation,' are used as weapons to thwart any international criticism of the society we are creating here. This is a society with built-in discrimination on the basis of nationality, and the discrimination is spreading on either side of the Green Line. This is a society that is systematically continuing to banish the Palestinian nation from its land and usurp its rights as a nation and its chances for a humane future."